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Climate Change induced by Southern Hemisphere Desertification

Ye Wang, Xiaodong Yan

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- 2 Ye Wang^{a*} Xiaodong Yan^b
- 3 [a]{College of Civil Aviation, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics,
- 4 Nanjing 210016, People's Republic of China}
- 5 [3]{State Key Laboratory of Earth Surface Processes and Resource Ecology (ESPRE),
- 6 College of Global Change and Earth System Science, Beijing Normal University, 19
- 7 Xinjiekouwai Street, Haidian District, Beijing 100875, People's Republic of China}
- 8 ^{*}E-mail: <u>wytea@126.com</u>
- 9 Abstract.

Some 10 to 20% of global dry-lands are already degraded, and the ongoing 10 11 desertification threatens the world's poorest populations. Studies on desertification 12 effects are essential for humans to adapt to the environmental challenges posed by desertification. Given the importance of the much larger southern ocean to the global 13 climate and the Southern Hemisphere (SH) climate changes in phase with those in the 14 north, the biogeophysical effects of the SH desertification on climate are assessed 15 16 using an Earth system model of intermediate complexity, MPM-2. This analysis focuses on differences in climate among the averages of simulations with desert 17 expansion in different latitude bands by year 2000. The localized desertification 18 causes significant global changes in temperature and precipitation as well as surface 19 20 albedo. On the global scale, cooling dominates the SH desertification effects. 21 However, the biogeophysical effects are most significant in regions with 22 desertification, and the cooling is also prominent in northern mid-latitudes. Desert expansion in 15°-30°S reveals statistically most significant cooling and increased 23 24 precipitation over the forcing regions during spring. The global and regional scale responses from desertification imply the climate teleconnection and address the 25 importance of the effects from the SH which are contingent on the location of the 26 27 forcing. Our study indicates that biogeophysical mechanisms of land cover changes in the SH need to be accounted for in the assessment of land management options 28 29 especially for latitude band over 15°-30°S.

30 Keywords: Desertification, Modeling, Climate change

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